

An Alternative View on Ascribing Blame for Alleged Chemical Weapons Attacks in Syria

Adam Larson, co-founder Citizen's Investigation into War Crimes in Libya

(in consultation with other CIWCL members and allies)

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Attachments 1-7: Contained in PDF *OPCW Attachments*

1 General Thoughts on the Investigation

(Note: this section was meant to be helpful and might be, but can also be optional - I apologize for any off-putting unprofessionalism in style or tone. I'm not the ideal messenger, but the one who stepped up, so please don't let any shortcomings on my part disrupt delivery of the message, or our part of it - the relevant considerations and facts that start at the next heading)

With truth underlying justice, and science being what it is to truth, the OPCW is rightly called on to again assess chemical weapons allegations in the Syrian Arab Republic. This – tasked to the Joint Investigative Mechanism agreed to on August 7, 2015 (hereafter JIM) - is potentially a mammoth task at the start, and I can only hope to add to the scope and complexity of it. (There seems to be ambiguity if this will be limited to more recent chlorine attacks or all chemical attacks as seemingly called for. This document seeks to cover all bases, sarin, chlorine, and other/unknown.)

The stated goals for Syria of the OPCW and the world community at large are consistent with our own at CIWCL-ACLOS: a just and timely end to the long-running conflict and the pain of the Syrian people. Human beings have died and suffered from criminal actions, many of those using banned chemical weapons. Opinions differ on who is responsible, but we would all agree the real culprits of these crimes should be identified and held accountable. Their cases should

serve as a deterrent to others who would try to win by gassing innocents. But so far, whoever's doing it has lied and gotten away with it, and just keeps going.

The OPCW and JIM will surely be given reasons to blame the Syrian government, and some reasons to blame the Islamist factions of the rebellion against them. The latter category may be a bit short, or there may be a temptation to write it off. And so it's in the interest of balance that I put all my weight on that class of options and plead that OPCW please take it seriously, as the possible truth it is.

The world is smart enough to sort out the truth eventually, even if it's different from what many today think it is, or different from what the JIM finally concludes. This document is intended to inform the OPCW of what CIWCL-ACLOS have discovered and published already towards an alternate narrative. **We have good reason to suspect these chemical incidents are mostly or all by opposition actors, with Jabhat al-Nusra most commonly implicated.** If so, hundreds of Syrian civilians were selected for death by rebels, sacrificed in a cruel bid at outside support. It may sound far-fetched based on what "everybody knows," but we can often point to surprisingly detailed findings as we declare **"everybody" might be wrong.**

If this is the case with these incidents - and the size of that if should be one of your most serious questions - will the OPCW be among those who helped expose the terrorists responsible to be held accountable? Or - given the hypothetical - will they be among those who enabled the criminals to avoid blame, stay on the field, and continue their murder and deceit?

I imagine there's some work going into the role change from scientist to police detective, from chemical questions to investigative ones like in a murder trial. Sometimes there may be no chemical test to be scientifically certain who's lying, and it's down to other evidence in each one of so many incidents where "both sides blame each other." Former British Army and Metropolitan Police detective counter-terrorism expert Charles Shoebridge raises some of these points that now come to the forefront in [this RT interview](#). For example, he points out the helicopter connection is not a given; it's a claim, likely designed to provide them with a "No Fly Zone" - and perhaps to cut off the actual truth at its knees. A rigorous investigation would be sure to look into claims like that as if the truth isn't yet known.

Syria's ambassador to the UN Bashar Jaafari said "neutrality" and "removal from politicization," among other principles, must guide the work of the JIM. Verbally everyone agrees, but he points to "preceding missions which, in the past, have transgressed all of these principles in their work and their practices, specifically because they were counting on false witness statements." ([Xinhua](#)) It might be wise to acknowledge this concern and accept the evidence of anti-government activists with more grains of salt than some have. The OPCW and JIM will have before them more detailed information (allegations) from these parties which are only lines that are best read, considered, then read between, and questioned in comparison to the rest of the evidence.

This complex approach included, projected over dozens and dozens of incidents you may be inundated with, means the JIM faces quite a daunting task. The job is so mammoth, perhaps some over-arching solution has to be managed early on. I would like to suggest with both selection of staff and of the data to consider; the right features to go for are: big, varied, and open-minded. Gather everything from everyone and prepare for any way of looking at it. Invite different kinds of subjective views to be aired and considered, and have whole teams looking at it different ways - one trying to blame rebels, one to blame the government, etc. - and compare results.

Keep in mind the wrong findings would go towards reward the criminals, and even punishing the victims or their protectors. A risk like that, in a case of such serious crimes, clearly merits

balance and vigilance. And wouldn't it be better to exercise too much imagination, properly filtered, than not enough?

2 More specific thoughts, by case details

[A Closer Look On Syria](#) (ACLOS) has covered a good portion of the alleged chemical attacks in Syria to some degree, especially earlier cases (19 incident pages at ACLOS, some covering several incidents). This is based on open-source research, and in some cases is already among the most widely-read sources on the subject.

In the following sections, I will refer to nine higher-profile, most-examined attacks, each with a link to the ACLOS page. Pages are of varying quality and completeness, with most material left in development on the discussion pages. ACLOS links in this report mostly go to the specific section for that point. Other citations will include the affiliated blogsite [Monitor on Massacre Marketing](#) (Monitor) and some especially useful reports from other people.

"Sarin phase" (2013, roughly) :

- March 19, Khan al-Assal, Aleppo [Alleged chemical attack, March 19, 2013](#)
- April 13, Sheikh Maqsoud, Aleppo [Alleged Chemical Attack, April 13, 2013](#)
- April 29, Saraqeb, Idlib [Alleged Chemical Attack, April 29, 2013](#)
- August 21, East and West Ghouta, Damascus suburbs [Alleged Chemical Attack, August 21, 2013](#)

"Chlorine phase" (2014-present) :

- 2014 Hama-Idlib attacks as covered by the OPCW, focusing on the deadly four (April 11 Kafr Zita - April 18 Tamanah - April 21 Talmenes - May 22 Tamanah) [Alleged Chemical Attack, April 11, 2014](#)
- 2015: we've covered mainly just the initial alleged attack of March 16 in Sarmin, Idlib. [Alleged Chemical Attack, March 16, 2015](#)

First, an attempted full overview considered by the lens of Motive, means, and opportunity, in a slightly different order.

2.1 Means: sarin, rockets, grenades, helicopters

Despite Syria's known stockpiles of the nerve agent sarin back in 2013, it has long been clear that some on the rebel side - Jabhat al-Nusra in particular - also had access to at least "kitchen-grade" sarin during 2013, and were apparently using it (see Mokhtar Lamani, the UN Special Representative in Syria, [via ACLOS](#) – UNHRC investigator Carla Del Ponte [via ACLOS](#), [via UK Independent](#), investigative reporter [Seymour Hersh](#), and other reports, some [via ACLOS](#)). Throughout the first half of 2013, several chemical attacks were alleged by both sides in the conflict, most of them against rebel areas and said - with varying levels of clarity - to test positive for sarin. In general, either side could be behind these events.

The methods of delivery varied. In the March 19 attack on Khan al-Assal, everyone agreed some kind of rocket or missile was responsible. But either side would have rockets capable, and both sides blamed the other for firing it. The chemical here apparently killed and tested like sarin, either in some mixture or in an impure form. The alleged details merit careful review. ([ACLOS](#))

In the events of April 13 and April 29, activists alleged that the attackers used gas-emitting

plastic grenades of unknown origin, earlier seen in possession of Jabhat al-Nusra members in the Aleppo area. They were later alleged to also be found on captured government soldiers, supplied to Syria by Iran. ([ACLOS](#)) If that's so, clearly some were seized and both sides would have them. And if that's not so, then only the rebel side had them.

In these April attacks, activists said the grenades were dropped from helicopters, proving whose they were. They say April 29's attack on Saraqeb had either 2 grenades stuffed into a concrete box, or "two barrels, allegedly containing sarin mixed with TNT," or plastic bags of powder (accounts differ; see [ACLOS](#)). However the video of the daylight drop shows the alleged box/barrel glows and emits white smoke on its way down - just like a piece of white phosphorous, which would be a good visual screen for a likely army operation in the area. [Brown Moses agrees](#) it glows "as if it was on fire," but thinks it's a concrete box with gas grenades anyway.

Syrian official sources reported that terrorists occupying the area had forced local civilians to inhale powder from plastic bags and fumes from a barrel, in two separate locations ([ACLOS](#)). That sounds within rebel means, but the one opposition report says the bags were dropped from a helicopter, and others said the barrel bombs were dropped that way. However it happened, it's reported that the one clear fatality tested positive for sarin exposure, although the record on that seems jumbled ([ACLOS](#)).

As for the Ghouta alleged sarin attack of August 21, most agree a sarin vapor is to blame, dispersed from a dozen or so rockets in Zamalka. Again, both sides could deploy sarin, and the best analysis suggested in the end both sides were capable. An important study found it aerodynamically impossible the rockets came from the government-held missile base originally claimed; they had to be fired from no further than about 2 km, not the claimed 10. ([Lloyd and Postol via McClatchy](#)). Both sides could also access the apparent firing location, as triangulated by rocket trajectory and arc of attack to a contested spot about 2km northwest of the impact area ("[Sasa Wawa](#)" via [ACLOS](#)).

In the chlorine era, the case for exclusive government control of the means might seem stronger than in Ghouta. Many have made Syrian government guilt sound obvious; only they can reliably operate helicopters deep in Syrian airspace, and all activist-alligned alleged witnesses are clear these chlorine devices are also being dropped from helicopters.

However, we would point out helicopters are only alleged. The claim enjoys limited logical support, and virtually no direct evidence other than the verbal kind. At least one video claims to show a full drop from helicopter to explosion, but it's questionable (see suggested actions below). Otherwise there's little to no video of these events even attempted. The attacks are said mainly to happen at night, but a dim video with the sound of thumping blades far above, that described "whistling sound" for x seconds, then the impact would be helpful. But I have not yet found one example.

Availability of chlorine itself is little issue. Jabhat al-Nusra, the main administrators of the area suffering attacks in 2015, once seized Syria's main or only chlorine factory near Aleppo when it was stocked with hundreds of tons of the stuff. Smaller amounts can be obtained by them or whoever in myriad ways.

From there, chlorine can be released in a number of ways. For example, an improvised catapult could launch a full-sized barrel bomb and mimic almost any angle of descent to appear as if from a helicopter. In any case where descent angle is more like 45 degrees to the ground, rather than 90, a catapult or the like is all but proven. In cases where the size of the actual munition is unclear, it could have been a simple mortar shell. In any case where we're shown an impact point, and elsewhere patients or fatalities, it's possible they're not even connected,

especially if the clinical signs don't match (see below).

In any case where the guilt of opposition groups cannot really be scientifically ruled out, it comes down to the details of the case, considered in light of who has to motive.

2.2 Motive: crush a rebellion vs. topple a government

The Syrian government's motive for using chemical weapons is thought by many to kill or terrify its perceived opponents, the Sunni majority of Syria, especially in "liberated" areas. However, any kind of mayhem in Syria is inherently more to the benefit of those seeking the government's overthrow, with anything easily blamed on "Assad" and the Libya example of rebellion bailout to look to and hope for.

But these vague general principles are clearly not enough to call guilt for any particular crime, and again it's down to the details.

Sarin allegedly killed hundreds of people on August 21, 2013 - a date the killers selected. UN chemical weapons investigators (or "inspectors") had just arrived in Damascus two days earlier, long after Syria's government had requested them to investigate the Khan al-Assal attack. But they were unable to do that, having to probe the attacks next door instead, find sarin, and bolster the case against Syria. Also, those rockets were launched exactly one year after US president Obama first announced his "red line" threat (as explained [here](#)). Did Syria just chose to flaunt that threat so massively on its birthday, after fighting to get inspectors there just in time? Or did rebels take the Sellstrom team's arrival so near the 21st it as the best time to do it for them? Consider this from a Wall Street Journal report speaking to means, opportunity, and motive:

But Mr. Sellstrom said he believed both sides in the conflict had the "opportunity" and the "capability" to carry out chemical weapons attacks. Mr. Sellstrom had just arrived in Damascus to negotiate a visit to Khan al-Assal when the Aug. 21 attack occurred. He said one of his earliest reactions to the attack was that the Syrian government had to be stupid to pull it off with U.N. inspectors in town. (WSJ via "[Sasa Wawa](#)")

In this light, motive to use this shared opportunity can be clearly seen to favor the opposition. Only by scientific means could that be clearly ruled out; there was proof those rockets came from a regime missile base 10 km distant, we were assured. But that failed and we're left with either side capable, and only one with a clear, rational motive.

Chlorine hardly kills anyone in most cases, and is thought to be used by Damascus in a plan to terrify people in "liberated" areas. These have an irrational fear of chlorine, opposition activists say, and so a "no-fly zone" is the only way to stop the "psychological torture" and the waves of displacement it causes. (see [Dr. Mohammed Tennari](#)) That it might lead to a Libya-style air war or other problems for the government doesn't seem to worry them in this narrative - causing terror, displacement, and a few deaths, largely of babies, is reason enough to take the risk.

Perhaps in this narrative chlorine was chosen as the replacement for sarin due to its indispensability. The Assad government cannot surrender its stocks of chlorine in order to avoid (whatever the true consequence would have been), as happened with sarin. This time, if anything goes, it will have to be Assad. (see att. 3) That set-up might count as an anti-motive for the government side, which raises the demands on supporting evidence.

2.3 Opportunity: the ongoing civil war/regime change campaign

As their critics see it, the Syrian government headed by president Bashar al-Assad continues to enjoy some support from other governments and parties, some portion of the country's

depleted populace, and most importantly a "culture of impunity" at the international level ad/or a lack of open warfare to force all Syrian government actions to stop. In short, the government's continued existence is the problem because, for whatever reason (considered above) they keep killing. The opportunity afforded by existence is hard to ignore, and keeps the government in the potential blame frame in every case considered.

The opportunity for opposition forces to carry out any of these crimes they committed is the regime change campaign from 2011 to the present. This has enabled a flow of weapons and fighters, financial, political and media support, underpinned by declarations that Syria's government is illegitimate and needs replaced, taken by so many as a green light to try and take over. Those with motive and means were able then to battle their way into possession of firing positions, gain access to potential victims, and otherwise become poised to use their expanded means in ways they could never dream of before 2011. If they had the motive, moral capability, and little fear of the consequences, this could become just the problem everyone is fretting over and largely mis-diagnosing.

As long both these sides exist and fight each other, the current situation - with or without its chemical weapons aspect - will likely persist. All realistic plans to end the conflict, in my opinion, will involve closing one of these opportunities. We might notice the path to where we are - approaching half a million killed and many millions wounded, orphaned, displaced etc. - is a four-year-long road littered with the wrecks of unrealistic plans.

3 The blamed poison is irrelevant sometimes

(This and the following section seek to expand on and transform the important "means" category with more clues that rebels were capable of and perhaps actually guilty for each of these chemical incidents.)

The 2013 Ghouta attack's widely-accepted sarin rockets, as stated, could be from either side. But simply leaving it there would be lazy. I've had to note visual signs at the impact sites that these rockets were used as fuel-air explosives, which would rule out sarin dispersal. The visual evidence that's based on is possibly worth a review by experts; damage pattern and burn rings app. 30 meters wide have a pattern suggesting they were fired from the north-northwest, just like direct impact clues say (see [ACLOS](#)).

And even without that total preclusion, the rockets still could be unrelated to the poison gas(es) that killed so many; considering rebel access, the sarin traces found by UN inspectors at the impact sites could have easily been planted there. And sarin itself might be irrelevant; the human samples could have been from voluntary ingestion of token amounts by selected false witnesses (signs say exposure among those tested was generally quite low - attachment 1). The mis-matched returns in Moadamiyeh – no environmental sign of sarin but uniform human returns - would be consistent with this (see "[Sasa Wawa](#)").

These limits matter because those victims seen in photos and videos lack any consistent indicators of sarin poisoning (SLUDGE syndrome, etc.) and **they were never tested for it**. The UN's investigators chose to not sample any actual fatal victims for chemical clues, instead relying on rebel-screened alleged survivors with low-level sarin exposure, described as survivors of just the same thing. Descriptions can be incorrect, and sarin was never proven to have killed the x-hundred victims (see Attachment 1).

One portion of nearly 100 victims in Kafr Batna is especially clear in probably not dying from sarin. Affiliated researcher Denis O'Brien, a trained neuro-pharmacologist, analyzed the videos and higher-resolution photos in his 2014 study *Murder in the SunMorgue* (MITSM - see summary article, att. 1) Sarin indicators are relatively absent. As he found, the clinical signs of

the deceased suggest they were killed with a rubigenic poison (causing excessive red coloration), the simplest possibility being **carbon monoxide**. Hissing gas tanks in basement "clinic" beneath this morgue site suggest oxygen to cleanse an airspace that had been poisonous, perhaps after other tanks were opened in there. There seems to be almost no medical equipment there except many gas cylinders, some emptied. (att. 1)

Other chemicals that could be easily managed are suggested in other portions of the Ghouta victims. Serious rhinorrhea, redness, cynosis, and even skin burns are prevalent especially among the "Ain Tarma cemetery victims," as shown in horrible photographs ([Monitor](#)). This seems more consistent with chlorine, for example, than with sarin.

One specific boy in Irbeen was seen alive and being given intranasal intubation, and then seen dead with a massive nosebleed and mysterious marks added to his face - after coming under the care of opposition activist medics. (att 2, point 4, and others listed there have similar marks)

Other alleged sarin victims appear to have been executed with weapons instead. One family of nine, including five children, was filmed shortly after the attack in a vacant construction site near the Zamalka rocket impacts ("Zamalka ghost house" - see [here](#)), described as sarin victims who tried to escape the vapor. But the signs disagree, and say they're decayed about a week (bloated, discolored dark, oozing fluids, etc. - but lacking noticeable maggots). Other signs say it was execution with guns and bladed weapons that killed them, about 2-3 days before the rockets landed (see prev. link, att. 2, point 8).

One adult male victim of interest in Kafr Batna died later than most. As Denis O'Brien carefully explained in MITSM, again based on direct imagery, the man dubbed M015 was first brought in seemingly dead, hands relaxed, not bleeding, and laid with the other men. But later in the day he has clenched his fist, and started bleeding massively from the neck, a flow partly covered up with cloth. It seems almost undeniable **he was executed in the morgue after the gas failed to finish him off**. Another man (M012) appears to have had his throat sliced prior to the morgue and was likely never gased at all (att. 1).

In the chlorine phase of 2014 to present, the gas could be proven present in every single alleged attack - deployed by either side, even by the government from the air, and leave dozens of people gasping - and still be unrelated to the deaths that occurred.

In fact that seems to be the case for the crucial March 16 attack on Sarmin. Whatever the proof for chlorine there in general (it seems strong), **the clinical signs of the three babies famously seen dying on video do not connect**. Rather than any convincing package of chlorine indicators, the observable signs (pale, flaccid, almost completely unresponsive, with little to no breathing or efforts at it) point more to **an overdose with opiates** or similar CNS depressant drugs (see attachment 4). This happened at an opposition clinic in a rebel-held area, and is not likely to have anything to do with a passing government helicopter.

In the 2014 series of attacks, the first one on April 11 featured a widely-noted 2 victims, both actually killed by head injuries. My probing into opposition records suggests there may be 5 victims, with at least three suffering head wounds (att. 6). Whatever caused them, these injuries did what the added opiates did for the 2015 campaign - allowed a string of alleged low-toll chlorine attacks to begin with an unusually deadly 'first-and-worst' incident to grab the world's attention.

4 Evidence the victims were targets or prisoners of the rebels

The March 19, 2013 attack was against the Shia-majority town of Khan al-Assal, which the

rebels had largely occupied but just lost to a government offensive. The rocket impacted near one of the army's posts, and so the victims were soldiers and mainly Shia civilians - arguably legitimate targets for Sunni Islamists.

The April 13 attack was the other way around; rebels had just conquered Sheikh Maqsoud when the gas grenades were allegedly dropped there. All other considered attacks happened in rebel-held areas. While this might provide motive for a government attack, rebels would likely have a hand in things like deciding who was positioned where relative to their military targets. Worse yet, they could decide directly who they would murder to blame the government, with an occupied area to cull from.

For the August 21, 2013 attack on rebel-held districts of Ghouta, the number of victims was never conclusively set, with estimates from 300+ to 1,400+. My own count has a visual minimum of about 420-500, with a maximum probably well under 1,000 (Monitor: [death toll](#) and sub-study [body recycling](#)). That's still a very large number considering the alleged rockets and spread on the wind over a depopulated area, when only about 30 died in the enclosed Tokyo subway attack. The numbers here suggest gas chamber efficiency, and recalling all attacks were against rebel-held areas, it's clear who would probably be running chambers there.

Further, some clues in the visual record suggest at least some of the victims of the August 21 attack were kidnapped citizens (see attachment 2 for all). A few examples: three men in Jisreen were starved prior to gassing, and left emaciated, which happens easier with captivity. In Irbeen, luggage and bedding were seen piled next to the corpse array, suggesting people had gone there for a stay, not an emergency rush. The executed family of 9 mentioned above appear to have been captives - two women wear black winter coats in August, all with no other possessions.

The chlorine era, thankfully, has less victims to consider. The 2014 attacks in Hama and Idlib provinces have 16 likely victims as I tally it (OPCW's December report lists 13). Of those 16, 13 were listed as internally displaced persons, like a less clear number of the Ghouta victims were. That's a curious detail that must have some explanation. Here I would suggest they might be "displaced" meaning captured, perhaps some among the reported 80 civilians taken by Islamist rebels from the nearby Alawite village of Ma'an on or around February 9, 2013 (see att. 6, and suggested actions)

The 2015 Sarmin attack had no clear signs of imprisonment, but perhaps of targeting: Six victims of a Taleb family died, including a grandmother Ayoush Qaaq (or Qaq). This is a rare name, at least in casualty records. For the last four years an opposition database lists 12 total Qaq victims, with one killed in the Ghouta chemical attack, Ayoush killed in Sarmin, and 7 others taken by non-CW means prior to her. Then the family (or one of the same rare name) suffered two more hits in Sarmin - chlorine again on March 26, when it's said a Qaaq girl survived, then a barrel bomb or "vacuum missile" (accounts differ) randomly killed 3-12 of her family members the next day, or the same day. ([ACLOS](#))

5 Some suggested concrete actions

With the preceding explanations, I suggest these concrete actions, if they seem worth following up – and I hope others will be bringing similar.

- Approach skeptical experts with some knowledge of the events in question, like Charles Shoebridge (sometimes available on Twitter [@ShoebridgeC](#)).
- Consider yourselves already approached by me – I've struggled a bit over how to assemble this, and the sources, may have missed some explanation. Anything I can help clarify, feel free – caustic_logic@yahoo.com or adam@ciwclibya.org. I can also be

contacted by telephone at (____)_____.

- 2013 Khan al-Assal attack: OPCW should give the Russian investigative report a fair review, maintaining skepticism but avoiding dismissing or ignoring its findings. Between this and all other available sources, including clarified opposition explanations, the OPCW should consider most likely whose rocket that was, who fired it and from what direction, and what chemicals were likely used.
- Khan al-Assal: the OPCW should review my 2013 article on Syria's early efforts at an investigation of the event, and consider if that process seems at all fair, especially considering what happened once the investigators finally arrived. This is attachment 7 in the PDF. One point to take from it: Western-oriented agencies should be thankful the government of the Syrian Arab Republic is even willing to work with them at all anymore.
- Ghouta attack: What chemical(s) was/were responsible for the fatal exposures (best guess by imagery, if nothing else)? Can any better evidence be found sarin killed any of them, or is it still questionable?
- Ghouta attack, Kafr Batna: What chemical killed these victims, best guess by imagery if nothing else (att. 1). The site, which has been geo-located exactly in Damascus (as centered [here on Google Maps](#), said to be the Tuberculosis hospital, could still hold indirect clues of what happened there.
- Ghouta attack, Kafr Batna: Affiliated as they are with an alleged sarin attack, the OPCW should consider who killed M015 and M012, the men with the apparent fatal neck wounds. (att. 1)
- Ghouta, Zamalka Ghost House victims: is that family of nine a victim of any chemical weapon? Who is most likely responsible for their deaths? ([ACLOS](#))
- Ghouta, FAE signs: a balanced weapons expert or two should be tasked with looking at the visual evidence I've cited for the rockets being used as fuel-air explosive weapons. ([ACLOS](#))
- March 16, 2015 Sarmin attack: what chemical is responsible for the video-recorded deaths of the three children (best guess by imagery, or reliable and consistent medical records, not inconsistent verbal descriptions)? The two emergency room videos in question should be reviewed carefully by experts in medical diagnosis and perhaps a chemical expert to say if there's actually some exotic form of chlorine that hits its victims in this manner.
- Critically analyze any video or other direct evidence for a helicopter link to chlorine bombs or to sarin grenades (best known example, allegedly Kafr Zita, April 11 - [Youtube link](#) - the actual fall time compared to helicopter altitude, and other details like the video edits, all should be examined carefully by balanced experts (on weapons and on video analysis). Does this reflect the unique whistling sound OPCW has heard about? Is the blast size and nature consistent?
- 2014 attacks: Were any Ma'an citizens among those killed or affected? We suggest comparing any available images against any files the Syrian authorities have for the missing. We do not suggest pressing the question directly with armed rebels out in the field. And keep in mind those are just the most high-profile prisoners known - a Ma'an mismatch does not rule out the possibility of captive victims.
- Preparing for the hypothetical: considering what happened in August 2013, the OPCW

and JIM should deflect any attempt to co-opt them into a possible rebel false-flag CW event, especially one that coincides with their presence in Syria. I hope no one tries this, but if they do, the OPCW and JIM should instead aggressively identify and denounce it, or at least avoid leaping to blame the government. Put it in context as best as you quickly can, put it on the list to investigate more fully, keep to the full list and don't let the distraction waste too much valuable time.

- As the JIM sets to its important and dangerous work, I wish everyone the best of luck at connecting power with actual truth, and doing it safely.